

Fort Davis

National Historic Site

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 6-8

Teacher Notes: Interpreting History through Maps

Interpreting History through Maps

Topic: Being able to use maps and other visual representations are critical skills in today's workplace. Historical information and trends can be discovered by looking at maps and studying the way they change through the years. This lesson gives students an opportunity to critically examine several maps and draw conclusions about the western expansion of Texas forts and settlements. Students will also be able to compare current maps with primary source maps.

Objectives and Standards: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/>

Grade 6

Social Studies

113.22: 1,2,7, 20, 21,22,23

Language Arts

110.22: 4, 11, 13 15

Grade 7

Social Studies

111.23: 1,5,6,8,9,10,11,19,20,
21,22,23

Language Arts

110.23: 4, 11, 13 15

Grade 8

Social Studies

111.24: 1, 6,10,1330,31,32

Language Arts

110.24: 4, 11, 13 15

Materials Needed:

One "Interpreting History Through Maps" handout per student or group

Lesson Activities:

Historic readings/background information:

Discuss the need for maps in 1850. At that time, most of the southwestern United States was unmapped. Travelers sometimes got lost and died because they did not have accurate maps indicating water holes, rivers, or other geographic obstacles. The maps in this activity point out the western movement of the line of U.S. Army forts and settlement across Texas. The activity is geared toward encouraging students to use critical thinking while answering the questions; in addition, they should draw on prior information learned.

Activities and Projects:

Students can work individually or in groups to get information from these maps. Discuss the reasons that forts were established, and discuss the movement westward as the frontier was settled. Read and answer the questions about the maps.

Additional Activities:

Students can visit the Texas Beyond History website to learn more: www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/ Have students compare past and present community street maps. (Old maps are often available from the library). Have students note the changes and form hypotheses about causes for the changes.

Wrap-up and Assessment:

The teacher may use any assessment or grading that is appropriate. A project rubric is available and can be modified to suit this project if desired. Maps used with permission from “Texas Beyond History” at <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/military.html#map>

Answer Keys

U.S. Army Forts in 1849

1. In 1849, what were the two routes through Texas from San Antonio to El Paso?
Lower Road and Upper Road
2. Which fort is the most northern of the early forts? **Fort Worth**
3. Which two territories border Texas? **Indian Territory and New Mexico Territory**
4. The line of forts indicates the edge of the Texas Frontier in 1849. Is the frontier in eastern or western Texas? **east Texas**
5. Had Fort Davis been established by 1849? Explain why or why not.
No, the line of settlement at that time was still in east Texas.
6. What geographic features are displayed on this map? Why would it be important for travelers to know about geographic features? **rivers, mountains, marshes, coastline, etc.**

Texas Frontier 1849-1852

1. What does this map tell us about Texas from 1849 to 1852? Explain your answer. **Accept appropriate answers.**
2. Look at the unsettled areas of Texas. Which tribe occupied the northern section of Texas called the Panhandle? **Kiowa**
3. Which tribe ranged throughout central Texas? **Comanche**
4. Which tribes roamed the western- and southernmost areas of Texas? **Mescalero and Lipan Apache**
5. How would the presence of these tribes affect travel and settlement in these areas? Explain.
Accept appropriate answers.

Forts in 1854

1. What direction has the line of forts moved? **west**
2. Why do you think forts were needed? **More people were moving west.**
3. Name the forts established along the Lower Road. **Forts Inge, Clark, and Davis**
4. Why do you think travelers were glad to reach Fort Davis? **Accept appropriate answers.**

Forts in 1860

1. What was the new route across Texas? **Butterfield Stage Route**
2. What forts protected this new route? **Forts Cooper, Chadbourne, and Bliss**
3. What are the new forts along the Lower Road? **Forts Lancaster, Stockton, and Quitman**
4. Would you rather travel by stagecoach or wagon? What might be the benefits of traveling by stagecoach? By wagon? Explain. **Accept appropriate answers.**

Forts After the Civil War

1. How many forts were active in Texas after the Civil War? **16**
2. What is the state of Oklahoma called at this time? **Indian Territory**
3. What is the state of New Mexico called at this time? **New Mexico Territory**
4. What is the most western fort in Texas? **Fort Bliss**
5. Why do you think most of the central Texas forts have towns near them but the western forts did not?

Greater population and more settlement in central Texas. West Texas is still considered the frontier-- dangerous and sparsely settled.

Post-Civil War Forts

Compare the first map with this map. Summarize the progress of the Texas frontier. Explain the reasons for the Texas forts. The line of Texas forts protected settlers as they moved west to settle or travel further west. The forts protected travelers and settlers from Indian attacks. By the time the U.S. Army closed Fort Davis, the area was relatively settled, a more law-abiding environment prevailed, and threats from Indian peoples or bandits had been eliminated.

As the army closed many Texas forts in the late 1800s, where do you think the troops went? (Draw on the information you read in the park literature.) Why were troops no longer needed? Who do you think took over law enforcement duties in Texas communities? Today, when large employers move from present-day communities, it generally causes economic hardships. Do you think the closing of the fort in 1891 affected the town of Fort Davis? Explain your answers. Accept appropriate answers. The troops moved further west into Arizona. Texas lawmen and rangers assumed law enforcement duties. The town of Fort Davis did have economic hardships after the fort closure.

What's on a Map?

Using highlighters or colored pencils, locate the following places on this map:

Communities -- Red

1. Marfa
2. Toyah
3. Fort Davis

Rivers/Creeks – Blue

4. Rio Pecos

5. Notice how mountains and hills are drawn on this map. Why would it be important for travelers to know about these geographic features? Since the travelers were traveling by horseback or wagon they needed to plan their route so they could avoid mountains and rough terrain.

6. Find the waterholes labeled on this map. Why would this feature be important to travelers in the 1800s. Travelers and their livestock could not survive without water and watering places were scarce in the desert.

7. Draw the mapmaker's symbols for these landforms and human-made features. Are today's map symbols similar?

Railroads

Mountains

Waterholes

8. As a historian and knowing that the railroad reached Toyah in September of 1881, about when do you think this map was drawn? 1850s, 1860s, 1870, 1880s, 1890s The map is a military map from 1885.

9. Why do you think they didn't generally put railroad tracks right through the middle of the mountains? Although it might be shorter it was much more difficult and expensive than building on flat land.